Poems

Vera Fibisan

Arrival at Paducah

An insight into the life of the Yellow Blossom Pearly Mussel, E. f. florentina

gravel gives underfoot sandy substrate teased into twisters in the current cut and scratched by the shrinking shoal

elliptical bodies
subjected to stream perturbations
siltation, erosion, pollution man
smothered by Zebra mussels
stretched to their limit upriver

buried in substrate untethered move with muscular foot towards extinction siphon sperm water from upstream

> eggs held in marsupial swelling a chamber for brooding glochidia scatter in spring stick to gills of unknown host fishes encyst

morphing land line hinge line curves with restless river bend

feet enjoy the cool thread blindly past the spawning beds stresses reapplied to flesh and shell

> sentient surface defaced by dynamic water gills gilded in heavy metals

Vera Fibisan (2019) Poems. PAN: Philosophy, Activism, Nature no. 14, pp. 94–97. sedentary smaller tooth bleeds swift's wingtip threads close to the water sees canopy on surface survives darts out of sight

> the submerged micro-landscape is peppered with particles of colour camouflaged among pebbles the honey-yellow periostracum pinches light

unraveled yarns of rays coat the surface green irises folded in half blinded by high turbidity levels

> knitting entangled paths with our feet bluish white nacre naiad dormant nestled in sediment

> > subcutaneous shades fight the current tailwater twists and confuses the senses tributary dam tourniquets the river florentina recoils reduced to rare specimens strip-mine conscience culminates bears absolute absence

a vacant bivalve shell short hinge ligament loosened and threadbare door flaps open in the current

The Pamphylian Sea

I. Isinglass

in silhouettedsun a woman carved out of the trunk of a teak tree grew in Nilambur shallow oculus of water deflated toothed wrack red seaweed dulse coins glint in the cracks of its body shiny discs of moderate value her tribute across the sea your hand dives into your pocket fingers curl around two coins one for each eye you think as long as they will shut and cease their chipped lacquer glaring you shake them through your fingers they will not grow into anything oxidizing leaving their shine on the surface of the sea glint on the rocks and taking on dark hues of

greenpurpleyellow oil spills in water react on the etching the female bust unnoticeable the tide pool flattened

this is the place where the vista unravels into a chess board or a mirror the water makes the first move against the shore obscured by a heavy coat of weeds the occupants of these dwellings battle it out when our turn comes we shift the heavy wooden figure diagonally on the shore a few squares we should be fine here for a few hours until the tide's next move the linearity of this square falls into a cube the damp room of another country things undisturbed for months spread familiarly on surfaces cavernous drawers books pressed against each other on a shelf this strange alphabet of an uninhabited space a scar on our landscape whose microscopy hits us in the face peculiar shapes of alive things call this place home the barren field of in-betweenness frames without doors windows without glass beds without sheets yet we sleep here our outlines marked by matching scars

II. In Absentia

leave footprints scars across the sea you know that you are home when the smell of salt turns into the dark pungent smell of naphthalene uninhabited house its windows shut too long in the familiar dim lit hallway the umbrella on the rack hits you on that day you wrapped its folds around whilst dripping you cannot use it anymore on the slippery rocks the soles of your shoes grip hard peeling fragments off their ragged surface they smell of sea ivory long ago treaded upon my umbrella smells the same in a corner the texture of wood on her body my former desk untouched for weeks the drawers unopened smell of dormant sheets paperweight presses down on them feel their harsh skin pad their way onto drawers' insides envelop it roots grip hard to barren surfaces my thalloid fingers grow on slanted walls near the sea on that damp side of the room in the seascape intrinsic waves see their reflection in the round mirror by the door try harder to make me seasick homesick on top of the waves the face of a steerless ship in the forbidden areas of one's house there is an opening in the wall where the sea breeze kicks in giving rise to drafts crusty dampened papers ruffle their letters to a dull blur vowels and consonants roll down the slope erratically vying in the mind the sight adjusts their wave function shake through an orbital the looseness of an open door the shoreline like the edge of this gigantic piece of furniture facing the vastness of a white space on a sheet of paper dusted in naphthalene Sea Ivory the fungus has infested my home

III Samael

an eyeless ship abandoned on the bottom of this bay pierce through the blue looking for a mast perhaps or a sail you listen for the sound of a ship's bell travelling across the water our bell is engraved with the name of a ghost recollections of ourselves in the same chambers we reinhabit today where we keep all our bells in glass jars their echo hits transparency and fades Melusina is a word uttered in underwater caves by anemone droplets hanging from ceilings mouthed by tentacle lips passers-by their hushed up words contorted syllables carried on the wind echoing in caves hitting their breadth body against the zonated crevices overhangs boulders stacks of crushed shells wilting into powder component granules of the voice sliding on the curvature echoing in the hollow of a shell leaving an incrustation in the ear canal siren's song long lost tinnitus our trinkets wrapped in rags in our pockets born from shellfish the barnacle geese sounds fly across the water their clock hand feathers brush the groundswells resound in the bell-less pools shore water cave water underneath sand water her tolling the weak pulse of this shore where the word water time is graffitied in etched trails on the stone

crackling faded sounds as if coming from rags tucked in pockets shells crushing on distance held in black beaks carried across the water by birds born from waves the ultimate act of cannibalism irregular itineraries marked on a map where we've placed our sea-serpents

enlarged winged creased cut by pencil marks ink blots breaking the way towards the shallows lighter blue eyes and breasts the face of a ship

IV. Nereid

swelled then the home scars get salty teaspoon shadows the chalk cliff surrenders some of its powder lace curtain on top of the water knee deep grandmother's wedding portrait is a seascape shadowed by rocks down the paths of this frame ridges of ornamental landscape carved wood harder to tread all the way down to the water given height sprawled dots of home scars freckle the waterfront you scatter your cargo carried for so long there are no sea-gulls no trespassers not a wave hits the shadow as you get nearer things come into focus on the rocks barnacles limpets weeds we add growth lines one by one build an encased shell leave scars on the rocks less human than before more barren smuggled cargoes remains of our own personal treasures litter the shore maybe come at the crossroads on whelk trails resurface with low ebb or dive deeper into pockets and drawers algae green damp coated rub off on our fingers make us smudge the white paper preserved white for too long give a little of their tint to our own words engraved or scribbled pick out our dusk serpents with sessile eyes one washed ashore stares back at us lacquer eyes glossy gaze neutral ready for the dark to dig its claws into the coast come to life more alive than human or beast without dwelling a shelterless map wrap rocks in rags weigh down the words mute monsters' faint movements as they float again in the dark when the water creeps back alters temperature salinity the bodily fluids of the bay revived it lifts the wooden figure on its shoulders caries it out at sea her payment left in pools coins can't glint in the dark torch oxidized fill in slits between rocks where there were none our work complete

V. Parting

grandmother's things went to a pawn shop we walk down this is street in a window we aren't allowed to look in the stratified masses of fossils rejected things that have settled intricately on top of each other shedding their shell to rock we lean in with sessile eyes the headlights of passing cars behind the glass on the horizon there is a window framed by mist we take it onto ourselves to rehome the things of the people we love in an unfamiliar room unsettling we are trapped into objects that we cannot reclaim for ourselves a strange pair of hands turns the handle dark starts to settle like purple ink a breeze a gentle murmur swells around our feet this water nymph gone we split our creatures into blooded and bloodless lymph phlegm water patrol every season of the mind comb the shore washed-up thing discarded long ago if we are lucky as the tide sweeps in the corner of a forgotten relic could peer at us from the inside of a shell the tip of a claw or the trickle of sand all these empty winkles are inhabited their occupants static spectres unseen for a long time who's to say their choices turn them into hermits they refuse to emerge from their bone pockets instead delve deeper inside where all the swirls start spiralling into nothingness the two ends of this stretch of land meet and move connect parts of the shore already done but drawing out the lines that hold them together where there was nothing before just the illusion of a looseness untied marked by our dragged steps our home scars where we lie just enough to leave a mark put lacquer on eyes start the round at the parting of the sea question whether or not to settle with the off-cuts of life